

**Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership Council Meeting**  
**Friday, May 29, 2015**  
**BMCW 635 N. 26 St.**  
**MINUTES**  
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**Members Present:**

Linda Davis, Mallory O'Brien, Libby Mueller for John Chisholm, State Senator Nikiya Harris Dodd, Milwaukee County Supervisor Steve Taylor, Kathy Pethke for B. Thomas Wanta, Colleen Ellingson, Susan Gadacz, Milwaukee County Supervisor Deanna Alexander, Maria Rodriguez, State Representative LaTonya Johnson, Judge Mary Triggiano, State Representative Jessie Rodriguez, and Christine Holmes.

**Meeting Notice**

First, the notice of the meeting was published in the Monday, May 25, 2015 edition of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. Second, the notice was faxed to the newspaper of record for the State of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin State Journal, on Tuesday, May 26, 2015. Finally, the notice was emailed to the Partnership Council stakeholders including any media who had requested such notice on Thursday, May 7.

Linda Davis opened the meeting with greetings and introductions.

A motion was made, seconded, and passed unanimously to appoint Sue Gadacz to the Health and Education Committee.

Orientation and training for all Partnership Council members will be August 18, 2015 at the BMCW Offices. The training will start promptly at noon. Lunch will be served. The meeting is open to Partnership Council members only.

Linda Davis announced that Colleen Ellingson was retiring as well as resigning from the Partnership Council. In recognition of her service on the Partnership Council and her work with children and families, she was presented with a plaque and thanked for her dedication and support to critical issues for children and families throughout her career.

**Project GAIN**

Kristi Shook-Slack presented information on Project Gain (Gaining Access to Income Now). Project Gain is a partnership between the Social Development Commission (SDC), the Wisconsin Children's Trust Fund, the Department of Children and Families, and the UW-Madison Institute for Research on Poverty.

Project Gain is external to the child welfare system and provides case management for families with economic issues. Families who are part of the program have had reports to BMCW that were closed after initial assessment. The program is voluntary, short-term and is driven by the needs of the particular family. Needs other than economic issues are not addressed by Project Gain, and families are referred to 211 for assistance in other areas.

The project provides a range of financial programs and services for families. Families set their own financial goals. Services include one-time emergency funding, if necessary, and a comprehensive

assessment of the benefits for which the family is eligible and help accessing those benefits. The biggest part of assistance/services to families is help with financial decision making.

Economic stress puts families at a heightened risk of becoming involved with child protective services. Low income families are over-represented in the child welfare system. Results from four federal studies indicate that child maltreatment of all types (and especially neglect) is inversely related to income level.

### **QPI (Quality Parenting Initiative), Julie Brown**

Julie Brown presented an overview of the Quality Parenting Initiative. The Bureau's QPI is about working to change the image of foster parenting by changing how the system works. The QPI is composed of staff from BMCW, SaintA, CSSW, and foster parents. The group began its work by developing a branding statement including goals and aspirations. The group has identified areas of major impact and has set up subcommittees to work on them.

- Confidentiality – what are the rules regarding confidentiality. Working to clarify what information a foster parent can expect to hear from the case manager and what is best practice for getting this information to the foster parents.
- Participation in court.
- Family visits – working on making family visits quality visits.
- Establishing structures for bringing bio families and foster parents together early in the relationship.

### **Critical Incident Committee Report, Mallory O'Brien**

Mallory O'Brien provided an update on the work of the Critical Incident Committee. The Committee met before today's meeting and discussed three cases. No recommendations were made. There are currently no new case to review. Ms. O'Brien reminded Partnership Council members that any member of the Council is invited to attend these meetings.

### **BMCW Interim Director's report**

Complaint Resolution Report was distributed. There was no discussion regarding the report.

### **BMCW Retention Efforts**

BMCW retention efforts were discussed by Access and Initial Assessment Section Chief, Lee Johnson. Mr. Johnson met directly with BMCW Initial Assessment staff to discuss issues related to staff retention. Regarding their first few days at the Bureau, staff were asked the following questions.

- How did those first few days feel?
- How did the training process go?
- Did staff feel they were adequately trained?
- How did individuals feel about their transition from the training team to a permanent supervisor?
- How was the workload for newly transitioning staff?

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In addition, at exit interviews, staff was asked about morale and why IA workers decide to leave the Bureau. Size of caseloads/workloads, the emotional stress of the job and the unpredictability of work hours were often noted as some of the reasons why staff leave.

BMCW is in the process of restructuring its staffing patterns. It has been determined that peak workflow hours are 1:00 pm to 7:00 pm. In response the Bureau has implemented a fully functional second shift with hours from 2:00 pm to 11:00 pm daily. Second shift is composed of two full Initial Assessment units with two Initial Assessment Supervisors. Second shift staff receive emergency referrals and keep these cases through case closure.

The Bureau currently has five Cases Aides who are paraprofessionals that are able to relieve IA staff of routine tasks. Additionally, BMCW's intern program allows interns to learn the job so they can become employed by the Bureau or its agencies at graduation. There are six to eight interns at BMCW per year, and each is supervised by an Initial Assessment supervisor during their time at the Bureau.

**DCF updates**

**Director Search Process and Role of the Partnership Council**

The search for an administrator of the new Division has begun with the job announcement going out earlier this week. Although this is an at-will position, the Department will be doing a nation-wide search. It is hoped that the Partnership Council will be utilized for input regarding the top two-three applicants.

**Long Term Vision for the Bureau/Division**

Secretary Anderson discussed her long term vision for the new Division. Since the Division and the work it performs are in Milwaukee, it would be better housed with the county, the long-term goal would be to put child protective services back with the County when and if the County is ready to administer the system. As we move forward toward the new Division, communication between the State and the County will be essential. We will need to work to get out of the final remaining provision of the settlement agreement.

It is hoped that there will be more information regarding the Division at the next meeting.

**DSP Updates**

It was announced that May is Foster Parent Month. Fourteen foster parents and two foster youths from throughout Wisconsin were recognized on Tuesday during a ceremony in Madison in honor of Foster Care Month. A special "Champion of Foster Care Award" was presented to Colleen Ellingson of the Coalition for Children, Youth and Families for over 30 years of work advocating for the support of children and youth in foster care.

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Wisconsin has selected to participate in a National Quality Improvement Center technical assistance project on post- permanency support.

**Joint Finance Committee**

The Joint Finance Committee has finalized several DCF-related items. The new Division has been approved as well as nine Initial Assessment Specialist and two Initial Assessment Supervisor positions. The Department will receive \$500,000 earmarked for retention policies and will receive funding to reflect the projected caseload levels in the 2015-17 biennium.

Beginning in 2016, the Department will begin to oversee the community based juvenile justice programs that are currently with the Department of Corrections.

Funding for sex trafficking victims, and domestic violence programs and the Connections Count program has been approved.

**Legislative Update, Sara Buschman**

Legislative proposals include funding for literacy improvement, and help for youth getting GED's were approved. The Legislature has been working on the possibility of extending Governor Walker's "Transform Milwaukee" program outside Milwaukee County as well as funding a mechanism to reduce rates of recidivism in Milwaukee County.

**Community Forum**

Mary Thomas thanked the Partnership Council for their support.

Respectfully submitted, Gail Zellner